

PARAMEDIC TESTING & LICENSING



California Emergency Medical Services Authority

Winter 1999

SCHOOL CLOSURE

As many of you already know, Samaritan Training Center closed its doors May 14, 1999, leaving approximately 167 students in various phases of their paramedic training. The EMS Authority offered to coordinate with Samaritan Training Center, the Solano County EMS Agency, and the Bureau of Private Postsecondary Vocation and Education to help these students get placed in other training programs, and we are very pleased that many of the paramedic training programs have stepped up to the plate and taken over the training of these students. This was not an easy task for the training programs which had to determine the level of training a student had received, devise mechanisms for assessing the student's knowledge and skills, and decide how to phase the student into an existing program. In addition, schools had to find field internships for many of these students,

never an easy task in California. These schools deserve recognition for their willingness to help.

Once enrolled in a new training program, former Samaritan students, who were California residents at the time of Samaritan's closure, are eligible for reimbursement for the cost of completing their education with another school. Students choosing not to continue their paramedic training are also eligible for reimbursement for the training they have received to date from Samaritan Training Center. Unfortunately, students residing outside California (and there were some) are not eligible for reimbursement. Deborah Godfrey and Eddie Solorio from the Bureau of Private Postsecondary Vocation and Education (BPPVE) held a meeting for former Samaritan students on May 25, 1999 in Vacaville to explain The Student Tuition Recovery Fund and how to apply for the reimbursement. Anyone still needing this information can call Ms. Godfrey or Mr. Solorio at (916) 445-3428, extension 3023 for Ms. Godfrey.

BPPVE has retained all the Samaritan records for students who had completed their training prior to Samaritan's closing, while the EMS Authority has retained the records for the students who had not completed their training, in order to facilitate student placement in other paramedic training programs. Schools contracting with former Samaritan students to complete their training can send a request for a student's record, along with a copy of

the contract with the student, to the EMS Authority, attention Paramedic Program Unit. Upon receipt of the request for records and a copy of the contract with the student, the EMS Authority will send the student's record to the requesting school. Although the closure of Samaritan Training Center adversely impacted a number of students, those impacts were mitigated for many of the students by the safeguards built into California's education system (Student Tuition Recovery Fund) and the willingness of many paramedic training program directors and others in the EMS community to assist the Samaritan students.

California's Passing Rate for the National Registry of EMTs (NREMT) Paramedic Exam for 1997 and 1998

Enclosed with this update is a list of the passing rates for California's paramedic training programs for the NREMT paramedic examination. The training programs are identified by the site code assigned by NREMT. This code can be found in the upper left hand corner of the exam results that are mailed to the training programs when their students take the exam. Some programs have more than one site code on the list, so each program needs to check through their files of test results to see if their program is one of them. The list may also include training programs that are no longer in operation if a graduate of that institution took the exam.

In this issue. . . .

School Closure	1
Passing Rate for the NREMT	1
Approved CE Courses	2
Live Scan Process	2
License Fees vs Testing Fees	3
New NREMT Exam	3
Reorientation of Skills Examiners	3
Paramedic Task Force	4
Update on NREMT	4
Enforcement Update	5
Fees Paid	6

The exam results include all graduates (past and present) that took the paramedic exam during 1997 and 1998. The overall passing rate for the first attempt was 83.20% for 1997 and 87.13% for 1998. This list also includes the passing rate for second and third attempts. Unofficially, according to Bill Brown, Executive Director of NREMT, California ranked about number 6 of the states that mandate NREMT in the passing rate. The response is unofficial at this time because the computer programmer for NREMT has quit and hasn't yet been replaced at the time the EMS Authority received this information. The EMS Authority will be requesting the 1999 exam results and an official ranking among the states that use the NREMT exam for the next *Paramedic Testing and Licensing Update*.

APPROVED CE COURSES

From inquiries received by the EMS Authority, there appears to be some confusion on acceptable approving authorities for continuing education (CE) courses for Emergency Medical Technicians in California. Therefore, it was felt that it would be helpful to provide the following summary on the ways in which a CE course can be approved.

There are actually four ways in which a course can be deemed approved for CE credit in California. The most common method of approval is when a local EMS agency reviews and approves continuing education providers who are headquartered in the jurisdiction of that respective local EMS agency and who meet the qualifications for a CE provider as listed in the paramedic regulations (Article 6, Chapter 4, Division 9, Title 22, California Code of Regulations) and the Guidelines for Prehospital Continuing Education (EMSA #127). Courses offered by these approved CE providers are easy to identify because they should

be advertised with the CE Provider Number which is issued by the local EMS agency when the CE provider is approved.

In addition, the EMS Authority can approve a statewide public safety agency (i.e., the State Fire Marshal, the California Highway Patrol, etc.) as a CE provider when such an agency requests approval and meets the qualifications for a CE provider. The EMS Authority can also approve a CE provider, who is headquartered out of state, when the CE provider meets the qualifications for a California CE provider. In both cases, the approved CE provider is issued a CE Provider Number for easy identification.

The EMS Authority has also deemed CE courses that have been approved for Emergency Medical Technicians by the EMS office of another state to be approved CE courses for California Emergency Medical Technicians. And, finally, courses that have been approved by the Continuing Education Coordinating Board for Emergency Medical Services (CECBEMS) are courses that the EMS Authority has deemed acceptable for CE credit for Emergency Medical Technicians in California. For verification of CECBEMS approved courses, you can write to CECBEMS c/o Continuing Medical Education, 800 West Jefferson Street, Kirksville, MO 63501 or call (816) 626-2192. Emergency Medical Technicians are encouraged to verify whether a course meets California's requirements for CE before participating in the course. The EMS Authority and local EMS agencies are often asked to approve a course for CE after the course has been taken. In many cases, this cannot be done either because the course does not meet the requirements or there is insufficient documentation to determine if the course meets the requirements.

Increase in Paramedic License Fee

The new paramedic regulations, which became effective April 13, 1999, authorize the EMS Authority to begin charging an additional fee of \$5.00 for paramedic licenses and license renewals. This new fee is to cover the costs associated with administering the provisions of Section 11350.6 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, known as the State Licensing Match System (SLMS). This Section authorizes the EMS Authority as a licensing agency (as well as other agencies that issue licenses, certificates, credentials, permits or any other authorization to engage in a business, occupation, or profession) to withhold the issuance or renewal of a paramedic license for parents who are in arrears in making child support payments.

The additional \$5.00 fee becomes effective with the July 1999 paramedic license renewals. In late March, new initial paramedic license applications with the fee increase were sent to the paramedic training programs to distribute to their next graduating class. Updates will be provided in future editions of the *Paramedic Testing and Licensure Update* as this process progresses.

Update On The New Live Scan Process for Paramedic License Applicants Criminal History Checks

On March 17, 1999 the EMS Authority sent a memo to all paramedic training program directors and local EMS agencies announcing the implementation of the new live scan process for the submission of fingerprints for criminal history checks for paramedic license applicants. The live scan process is the electronic transmission of fingerprints to the Department of Justice (DOJ) for criminal history checks. On July 21, 1999 the EMS Authority sent another

memo regarding the live scan process to the training program directors and local EMS agencies notifying them of a change in the process of payment for the paramedic applicants because of some of the problems encountered with the new live scan process. The primary change is that the EMS Authority will no longer be collecting the fees from paramedic applicants to pay to DOJ for processing criminal history checks. Instead, applicants using live scan are required to pay the DOJ processing fee at the time they are fingerprinted, and for those that are still using fingerprint cards, the fingerprint card and processing fee are to be sent directly to DOJ.

As with most new processes, there are still some “bugs” with the live scan process. One problem is some live scan transmissions seem to be going into cyberspace and never reaching their intended destination. DOJ has been working on this problem and believes that it has been corrected. The EMS Authority is beginning to receive results from criminal history checks that have been missing for awhile, however, some applicants have had to submit a second set of fingerprints.

Another problem the EMS Authority is encountering is that although the live scan process is faster than fingerprint cards, in some cases it is taking longer than the 3 to 7 days originally reported. This is due in part to the backlog of applicant submissions while DOJ has been correcting the problems related to the live scan submissions.

In the memo dated March 17, 1999 the EMS Authority stated that paramedic applicants should not have their fingerprints taken until just prior to submitting their license application. One reason for this was because the EMS Authority would be billed for the DOJ processing even if an applicant didn't complete the licensure process and the EMS Authority would not receive the payment from the applicant. Now that applicants are paying the

DOJ processing fee at the time they are fingerprinted, the EMS Authority wants to encourage applicants to have their fingerprints taken at least 30 days prior to graduating and send the EMS Authority the second copy of their Request for Live Scan Service Applicant Submission Form as soon as they have their fingerprints done. This will let the EMS Authority know who has had their fingerprints done by live scan and allow time for following up with DOJ for the results of background checks that haven't been received within the DOJ time frame as well as clear up any potential problems before there is a delay in the license application process.

License Fees vs Testing Fees vs National Registry Fees

The EMS Authority frequently receives phone calls from paramedic applicants checking on the status of their license application. When they are informed that the EMS Authority hasn't received their license application and fee, they are often surprised because they thought they had already submitted them when they applied for and took the National Registry examination.

With all the different fees paramedic students are required to pay to get their paramedic license, it's no wonder they're sometimes confused. There's the fee to NREMT, the fee to take the test, the fee for processing background checks and the rolling fee to have the fingerprints done, and then the license application fee, and by the time this update comes out we're going to change who some of the fees go to (see the article on Live Scan Update).

This is a request that the paramedic training programs advise their students of the various fees and to whom they should be paid. See the attached for a breakdown of the fees students are required to pay before they get their paramedic license.

NEW NREMT EXAMINATION REPRESENTATIVES ON THE HORIZON

In response to the need for more National Registry Representatives to administer the NREMT Paramedic Examination, which California uses as its licensing examination, the EMS Authority has scheduled a training course in November for new representatives. Robert Wagoner, Advanced Level Certification Coordinator for NREMT, will be conducting the training November 11-13, 1999 in Lodi, California at M.E.T.S., Inc., paramedic training program. This training site was chosen because Mr. Wagoner likes to hold the training in conjunction with a National Registry examination, and the November 12-13 test date was the only date that fit in with Mr. Wagoner's schedule.

Following the training, a list of the new NREMT examination representatives will be sent to all the paramedic training program directors.

Reorientation of Skills Examiners at Each Test

A while back the question was asked whether the skills station examiners had to be reoriented at each test. Some schools felt it was unnecessary to reorient the skills station examiners at each exam, and that the NREMT representatives are too rigid in this requirement. Bill Brown, Executive Director of NREMT, said at a round table discussion regarding the NREMT testing process that was held in Los Angeles, on August 28, 1997, that programs may consider not reorienting the skills station examiners if they are using the same examiners each time and the skills station examiners are experienced in the process. It is the EMS Authority's position as well that as long as all skills stations examiners are familiar with the process, it may not

be necessary to do the entire orientation for each exam. It is up to the exam coordinator and the NREMT representative to ensure that the skills station examiners are fully familiar with the process.

Reminder for NREMT Representatives

This is a reminder to the NREMT Representatives to check the test materials from NREMT as soon as they are received. There was an incident at one of the training programs in which not all of the test materials were shipped by NREMT, and it was not discovered in time to contact NREMT and get additional test materials sent by the exam date. As you can imagine, there were some very unhappy test candidates who had to reschedule.

Reminder for Training Program Directors

This is a reminder to the training program directors that the blue NREMT application should not be signed before your students have completed one half (240 hours) of their field internship. Since the EMS Authority has said that California's students have completed the equivalent of a U. S. Department of Transportation (DOT) approved curriculum by the 240 hours, they should be progressing successfully in their field internship and have completed at least half of their field internship before the application is signed.

PARAMEDIC TASK FORCE

During the last revision of the paramedic regulations, several issues were identified that needed to be further researched. To accomplish this task, the EMS Authority proposed the development of a task force to research these issues and make recommendations

for future revisions to the paramedic regulations. The members of the Commission on EMS agreed and the task force, made up of members from 15 different EMS constituent organizations, met for the first time on March 23, 1999.

The issues that the task force was asked to review included continuing education, continuous quality improvement provisions, EMS provider responsibilities, scope of practice, and the newly revised U. S. Department of Transportation's Emergency Medical Technician-Paramedic National Standard Curriculum. To date, the task force has reviewed and discussed the U. S. Department of Transportation's 1998 revised EMT-Paramedic National Standard Curriculum and has recommended California's adoption of the Curriculum as the basis for California's Paramedic training curriculum. The task force is also completing work on Model Disciplinary Orders, which will be used as sentencing guidelines by the EMS Authority and Administrative Law Judges when disciplinary action is taken against a paramedic license. Prior to their use, the final Model Disciplinary Orders will undergo the regulatory rulemaking process (regulations) which requires a minimum 45-day public review and comment period, a public hearing, and approval by the Commission on EMS.

The task force meetings are held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the last Tuesday of every month and the meeting location alternates between northern and southern California. The meetings are open to the public, however, only the task force members can engage in the discussions. For a list of the task force members, minutes of the meetings, or meeting sites, you can call Nancy Steiner at (916) 322-4336.

UPDATE ON NATIONAL REGISTRY OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIANS (NREMT)

In response to the 1998 revision of the U. S. Department of Transportation's EMT-Paramedic National Standard Curriculum and EMT-Intermediate National Standard Curriculum, NREMT will be revising their respective examinations. A practice analysis of the tasks accomplished by EMTs is currently being conducted by NREMT and is scheduled for completion by December 31, 1999. Data from the practice analysis will be used to prepare the 1999/2000 examination test plan.

The new paramedic and intermediate examinations will be available by October 1, 2000. However, the current NREMT paramedic and intermediate examinations will continue to be offered until about September 30, 2003 (proposed) in order to give states and training programs time to transition to the new curriculums. During the transition period, the examination booklets will be color coded to distinguish the current examinations from the new examinations.

Currently NREMT registered EMT-Paramedics will not be required to undergo any transitional training. The changes to the EMT-Paramedic National Standard Curriculum could be handled through refresher education programs or continuing education courses since the revised curriculum contains no new skills. Currently NREMT registered EMT-Intermediates, however, will probably be required to complete a 140-hour transition course over a four-year period and successfully pass the revised written and practical examinations within 2 years of completion of the transition course or be reclassified to EMT-Basic.

ENFORCEMENT UPDATE

EMSA Conducts Continuing Education Audits

Maintaining a professional license through Continuing Education (CE) course work is a practice enjoyed by other licensed professionals. However, in order to protect this professional status, a system must exist to assure licensees are abiding by the standards established by their peers. EMSA has become aware that there may be a minority of paramedics who do not wish to abide by the CE standards established by the EMS community. These individuals have submitted fraudulent applications to EMSA stating that they have taken all of the necessary CE hours required for paramedic licensure renewal. Through subsequent audits, it was discovered that these licensees had not taken the CE hours indicated on their renewal application. Submitting an application to EMSA with fraudulent information is a violation of Health and Safety Code section 1798.200 (c)(1) - Fraud in the procurement of any certificate or license under this division. This conduct is not only a violation of state law, but it also goes to the core of preserving the professionalism of those who abide by the standards established by the EMS community.

EMSA is charged with the responsibility of maintaining the professionalism of licensed paramedics through an active audit program. EMSA's enforcement unit conducts routine and random audits of paramedics throughout the State as authorized by law (California Code of Regulations, Title 22, Division 9, Chapter 4, Section 100168 (c)). Paramedic applications are randomly selected each month, and the CE hours reported on each application are verified. When an

individual has been selected for an audit, a letter is sent to the paramedic advising him/her of the audit. The paramedic is encouraged to contact EMSA should he/she have any questions regard the process. At the conclusion of the successful audit the paramedic is advised via letter that no discrepancies were found and acknowledged for his/her assistance in the matter. However, should the audit not be successful, EMSA would then evaluate the documentation collected and determine if licensure action is warranted. EMSA would like to assure the EMS community that confidential CE audits are completed in as short of a time period as possible and with the audited paramedic being notified of the outcome. It's the intent of this program to assist the EMS paramedic community in maintaining its professional standing. If there are any questions regarding this program, please do not hesitate to contact EMSA's enforcement unit for further details.

EMS Authority
1930 9th Street
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: (916) 322-4336
Fax: (916) 324-2875

Nancy Steiner Ext. 329
Connie Telford Ext. 326
Reba Anderson Ext. 337
Daryl Walker Ext. 340

<http://www.emsa.ca.gov>
nsteiner@emsa.ca.gov
ctelford@emsa.ca.gov
dwalker@emsa.ca.gov

FEES PAID

TO:	FOR:	AMOUNT	COMMENTS
NREMT	Registration Fee	\$35.00	This fee covers the cost of the written examination and National Registration.
Training Program Administering the NREMT Exam	Taking the Exam	\$125.00 to \$175.00	Fees vary by program. This fee is for the cost of administering the exam.
Training Program Administering the NREMT Exam	Retest	\$25.00 to \$30.00 per station	For practical exam only. Retest for the written exam requires an additional \$35.00 registration fee and application to NREMT.
DOJ or Live Scan Agency	Fingerprinting	rolling fee \$10.00 to \$15.00	If the rolling fee is more than \$15.00, applicants may want to check elsewhere to have their fingerprints done.
DOJ or Live Scan Agency	Criminal History Check	\$32.00 (Live Scan) \$42.00 (fingerprint card)	A fee above \$32.00 for Live Scan probably indicates the wrong application type has been entered in the Live Scan terminal by the operator. (See Live Scan Article)
County Recorder's Office or State Office of Vital Records	Certified copy of birth certificate	\$12.00 to \$25.00	To obtain a certified copy of their birth certificate to comply with one time federal requirement for documentation of citizenship, naturalization, or legal residency.
EMSA	License Fee	\$180.00	Includes the license application fee of \$175.00 and the \$5.00 fee to administer SLMS (see the article regarding the Increase in Paramedic License Fee).